

be interpreted cautiously. One of the ways of being cautious, which is of obvious relevance here, is to observe patterns across time. Often, small changes will not be interpretable, but a long, clear trend is meaningful even if each step along the way is a small one.

9. See also Green and Guth (1988). The fact that mean and incremental probabilities are divergent might seem oddly inconsistent. They can be explained, at least in part, by a change observed earlier—that among native southern whites. One of the major groups of white fundamentalists is Southern Baptists. As native southern whites moved away from the Democrats and toward the Republicans, this coincidentally moved Southern Baptists from the Democratic to the Republican side. But that change may not have had religious motivation, since until 1990, fundamentalism itself carried with it a small incremental nudge in favor of the Democrats.

10. "Dealignment" refers to the fact that more Americans began calling themselves independent in the mid-1960s, a change that has continued up to the present. See the distributions of party identification in Stanley and Niemi (1994, 158-60).

11. Although we analyze partisanship rather than the vote, if we had instead analyzed the presidential vote, many of the conclusions about the political significance of group membership would have been the same. Most vividly, change among native southern whites has left them voting less Democratic than the nation as a whole. The lack of a strong group basis for the Republican vote is also apparent. In these and other respects, a comparable analysis focusing on presidential voting would establish complementary findings.

12. Another striking change in the party coalitions, the greater proportion of the young, is politically significant but demographically inevitable as the older generations are replaced by the younger.

13. Historically, a greater proportion of men than women have been independent (Miller, Miller, and Schneider 1980, 88), so females constituted a majority of both parties.

14. This is a function, in part, of declining membership in unions. We noted earlier that the tendency for union members in 1990 and 1992 was for greater support of Democrats.

15. Comparable results for Republicans would be convenient, but those results have a distorting mirror-image aspect. Given the general Democratic tendencies of the group ties, removing the group ties means that the group's share of Republican identifiers, perhaps tiny to begin with, often swells to greater than 100 percent of its former size.

## CHAPTER 10

# Social-Group Polarization in 1992

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Politics always involves clashes of social groups. The interests of some groups come into conflict with the interests of others, and government must decide how to manage such conflicts. Whether it is unions versus businesses debating labor policies, fundamentalist religious groups versus feminists debating abortion laws, or gun owners versus law enforcement officials debating gun-control laws, group conflicts are at the heart of the American political process. Thus it is interesting to study and compare the roles of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews (see chapter 9), blacks (see chapter 7), and other such groups in the American political process.

Elections provide an opportunity for such group conflicts to become apparent, and 1992 was no exception. Bill Clinton's campaign clearly endorsed the interests of groups such as environmentalists, abortion rights activists, and homosexuals, and these groups publicly supported Clinton's candidacy. Similarly, George Bush's campaign stands were consistent with the preferences of fundamentalist religious groups, the U.S. military establishment, and law enforcement advocates. And presumably in response, these groups supported Bush's candidacy. Campaign rhetoric also focused at times on other social groups, including immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, Asian Americans, and Hispanics.

Over the course of the campaign, one set of social groups came to-

gether in a coalition supporting Clinton and the Democrats, and another set of groups banded together in support of Bush and the Republicans.<sup>1</sup> Even though the basic values and concerns of the various groups supporting a candidate did not always have much in common with one another, they came together in opposition to a common enemy. Because of the choice that Americans faced in the 1992 election, the two coalitions of groups came into conflict with one another.

These group coalitions are usually ideological as well as partisan. The world of politics that confronts American citizens through the daily newspaper and the television news is powerfully organized along ideological lines. That structure is evident at the elite level where votes in Congress often divide liberals from conservatives and where the two major political parties are distinguished principally by the Democrats' more liberal and Republicans' more conservative positions. For example, in the social welfare arena, liberals are more likely to desire governmental solutions to societal problems, whereas conservatives are more likely to favor nongovernmental solutions. Thus, in the early 1990s, liberals proposed a bill requiring businesses to grant new parents unpaid leave to take care of their children, while conservatives felt that businesses should decide such matters for themselves. Liberals thought government could help solve a problem in the private sphere, whereas conservatives viewed government itself as a problem. Group coalitions are likewise usually ideological, so elections often become conflicts between Democratic-liberal coalitions and Republican-conservative coalitions.

One purpose of this chapter is to explore the extent to which Americans' feelings toward social groups in 1992 reflected these coalitions. That is, did people who liked some groups associated with the liberal coalition tend to like all the groups in that coalition? And did people who liked some conservative groups like all of them? Or did people have loyalties to specific groups without liking other members of their coalitions?

Our second question is whether people's liking of these groups reflected opposition between them. In other words, did people who liked conservative groups also dislike liberal ones? And did liberal group supporters dislike the conservative groups? Or did most individual American voters like some liberal groups *and* some conservative groups, thus transcending the competition between them and failing to take sides? Stanley and Niemi report in chapter 9 that the New Deal coalition has died. This demise would be even more poignant if the polarization between liberal and conservative groupings were no more.

We find that Americans' loyalties toward social groups in 1992 did

indeed reflect the clumping of the liberal and conservative coalitions. Some groups dominated these two coalitions in voters' minds, reflecting the 1992 campaign itself. Perhaps most important, Americans saw these as opposing coalitions only to a limited extent, much more weakly than they had during most of the prior twenty-five years. Thus the 1992 election represents a weakening in the ideological cleavage of group conflict in American politics.

### *Social Groups in the 1992 Election*

Social-group involvement in the 1992 election paralleled recent elections, but with some differences. For one thing, the Republican Party aligned itself with social conservatives more than in 1988, partly because of the emphasis on family values in the Republican campaign and at the Republican National Convention. At the same time, the Democratic standard-bearers were less tied to the liberal side than in 1988 when Bush attacked Democrat Michael Dukakis as a card-carrying member of the liberal American Civil Liberties Union.

Some social groups that have been traditionally aligned with the parties were out of the limelight during the 1992 campaign. In particular, candidate Clinton campaigned as a moderate rather than fully embracing traditional Democratic liberal groups. He distanced himself from black activists, as when he criticized African-American rap singer Sister Souljah. Clinton came out in favor of welfare reform, so he was also not closely tied to those on welfare. He had union support, but that support was not a prominent part of the campaign. Clinton even received some support from retired military leaders, though Bush was more likely to be seen as favoring a strong defense establishment. The Republicans pushed for tort reform, so the Democratic campaign was seen as more favorable to trial lawyers.

The liberal social groups that were most prominent in the election included the women's movement (after the Anita Hill hearings by the Senate Judiciary Committee raised the issue of sexual harassment to political prominence), homosexuals (given Clinton's promise to allow gays to serve in the military), and environmentalists (due to Al Gore's strong pro-environmental position). The conservative social groups that were prominent in the 1992 campaign included right-to-life groups and Christian fundamentalists.

The extent to which these campaign appeals were mirrored in public opinion can be checked by looking at public opinion data from the 1992 campaign. To do so, we analyzed data from the National Election

Studies, which have measured attitudes held by representative national samples of American adults toward a wide array of social groups in presidential election surveys since 1964. In these surveys, attitudes were measured on a 101-point feeling thermometer scale, which ranges from 0 (indicating very cold feelings toward the group) to 100 (for very warm feelings).

The social groups asked about in the 1992 NES survey are listed in table 10.1. They include most of the groups that played a prominent role in the 1992 campaign (except the right-to-life movement) as well as several groups that are traditionally prominent in politics (such as those discussed by Stanley and Niemi in chapter 9).

The average popularity of each group in 1992 is shown by the column of means in table 10.1. Some groups were clearly popular with the American public, whereas others were not. The groups liked most were whites, the poor, the military, and the police. Republicans, people on welfare, liberals, Congress, lawyers, and the federal government were rated close to neutral. The only groups that were definitely disliked in 1992 were homosexuals and illegal immigrants.

Some of these groups were also more controversial than others. The standard deviations in table 10.1 measure the amount of disagreement among respondents in terms of the scores given to a group: large standard deviations indicate that the group was controversial, with many high and many low ratings, whereas small standard deviations indicate that the scores different people gave a group were fairly similar. We would expect that the groups most linked to the 1992 campaign would be the most controversial, whereas groups that include the majority of the public (such as whites) would not be controversial.

In fact, the groups on which there was most disagreement were homosexuals and fundamentalists—two groups fairly new on the political scene—plus unions, Republicans, and Democrats—three groups that have long been prominent in politics. The groups on which there was least disagreement were the poor, Asian Americans, conservatives, Jews, whites, and Hispanics. These groups were not very visible in the 1992 campaign, and they turned out not to be controversial.

Are attitudes toward all social groups polarized along ideological lines? We would expect that the groups most relevant to the 1992 campaign would have received the most polarized responses. We can test this by comparing the thermometer ratings of social groups by respondents who called themselves liberals, moderates, and conservatives. (This test uses a survey question that asked respondents to locate themselves on an ideological scale ranging from strong liberal to strong conservative.)

TABLE 10.1  
SOCIAL-GROUP POPULARITY IN 1992

	Mean	Standard deviation
Whites	71.1	19.0
Poor	70.6	18.0
Military	70.0	20.0
Police	69.4	20.3
Environmentalists	67.7	20.2
Southerners	66.1	19.5
Blacks	65.3	20.0
Catholics	65.0	19.6
Jews	64.6	18.8
Women's movement	62.0	22.3
Hispanics	61.0	19.1
Asian Americans	59.4	18.2
Democrats	58.9	22.8
Legal immigrants	57.7	19.9
Conservatives	55.8	18.4
Big business	54.9	20.0
Fundamentalists	54.8	23.5
Unions	53.8	23.4
Feminists	53.5	22.2
Republicans	51.6	23.4
People on welfare	51.0	19.8
Liberals	51.0	20.3
Congress	51.0	19.7
Lawyers	49.8	22.6
Federal government	48.0	21.7
Homosexuals	37.7	26.9
Illegal immigrants	36.1	22.8

SOURCE: 1992 National Election Study.

NOTE: Values shown are the mean thermometer rating of each group along with the standard deviation of the ratings given to that group.

The columns of table 10.2 divide the sample into these three ideological positions. Here we see that liberals liked one set of groups more than conservatives did, whereas conservatives liked a different set of groups more than liberals did. The largest differences, not surprisingly, are in ratings of liberals and conservatives. Liberal respondents also rated homosexuals, the women's movement, Democrats, and feminists much more favorably than conservatives did. Environmentalists, unions, and people on welfare were seen somewhat more positively by

TABLE 10.2  
SOCIAL-GROUP POPULARITY BY IDEOLOGY IN 1992

	Liberals	Moderates	Conservatives	Difference between Liberals and Conservatives
Liberals	70	51	33	37
Homosexuals	56	40	25	31
Women's movement	74	62	49	25
Democrats	69	58	44	25
Feminists	64	54	39	25
Environmentalists	75	68	59	16
Unions	57	52	44	13
People on welfare	57	50	46	11
Illegal immigrants	41	35	33	8
Congress	52	49	46	6
Blacks	70	63	65	5
Poor people	73	68	69	4
Hispanics	66	60	62	4
Legal immigrants	63	58	60	3
Lawyers*	50	47	47	3
Federal government*	47	46	44	3
Jews	68	64	67	1
Asian Americans	63	59	62	1
Catholics*	64	65	66	-2
Whites	69	69	72	-3
Southerners	63	65	69	-6
Big business	48	54	61	-13
Police	63	68	77	-14
Military	59	69	75	-16
Fundamentalists	42	52	66	-24
Republicans	35	52	64	-29
Conservatives	41	55	71	-30

SOURCE: 1992 National Election Study.

NOTE: Values shown are the mean thermometer scores given to each social group by the ideological categories. The last column is the difference between the mean score given to the group by liberals and by conservatives.

\* Unless noted with an asterisk, the differences in the groups' ratings are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

liberals than conservatives. By contrast, Republicans and fundamentalists were rated much more favorably by conservatives than by liberals. Conservative respondents also gave somewhat higher ratings on average to the military, the police, and big business as compared to ratings of those same groups by liberals.

It is also interesting to see how minimal the ideological differences were in ratings of nearly half the social groups. Liberals and conservatives gave about the same ratings of Jews and of Asians, and differences in ratings of lawyers, Catholics, and the federal government were not statistically significant. While statistically significant, differences by ideology in ratings of whites, Hispanics, the poor, blacks, southerners, Congress, and immigrants were still very small. The 1992 campaign did not sharply polarize the public ideologically along religious lines, while positive reactions to poor people and negative reactions to illegal immigrants were shared across the ideological spectrum.

Next, we employed a procedure (explained in the appendix to this chapter) to see how much attitudes toward each social group were associated with either a liberal coalition or a conservative coalition in voters' minds.<sup>2</sup> Table 10.3 shows the results of this mapping of the social groups for 1992. The two columns indicate how strongly each group was associated with what are called liberal and conservative "factors."<sup>3</sup> Feminists, the women's movement, the Democratic Party, and homosexuals were particularly strongly associated with the liberal side in 1992, as were labor unions, environmentalists, and the federal government. By contrast, the Republican Party, fundamentalist Christians, and the military were strongly associated with the conservative side, along with big business and the police. These results confirm our initial analysis, shown in table 10.2.

The strong presence of feminists and the women's movement on the liberal side may not have been new to 1992, but may have been heightened by the major role Hillary Rodham Clinton played in her husband's presidential campaign (see chapter 5). The relatively strong presence of homosexuals and the strong presence of environmentalists probably reflects the positioning of Clinton and Gore on issues relevant to those groups.

It is interesting to note that people on welfare and blacks had only relatively weak presences on the liberal factor. These groups are traditionally aligned with the Democratic Party and are often advantaged by legislation initiated by self-identified liberal politicians. Welfare policy and racial issues were relatively peripheral in the 1992 campaign, however, which may have decoupled them somewhat from the liberal end of the spectrum. The weak presence of blacks on the liberal factor is mir-

TABLE 10.3  
LOADINGS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL GROUPS  
ON LATENT FACTORS

Social group	Conservative factor	Liberal factor
Republican Party	1.21	
Conservatives	1.00	
Fundamentalists	.78	
Military	.71	
Big business	.61	
Police	.58	
Southerners	.28	
Whites	.23	
Catholics	.18	
Jews		1.13
Asian Americans		1.00
Legal immigrants		1.00
Feminists		.89
Women's movement		.82
Liberals		.65
Democratic Party		.52
Homosexuals		.47
Labor unions		.46
Environmentalists		.44
Federal government		.42
Congress		.36
People on welfare		.14
Illegal immigrants		.07
Lawyers		
Blacks		
Hispanics		
Poor people		

N = 2,205

SOURCE: 1992 National Election Study.  
NOTE: All groups shown have a loading of 1.0 on the method factor.

rered by the weak presence of whites on the conservative factor. In times of more overt racial hostility in the course of political debate, we would expect both blacks and whites to have a stronger presence on these factors. President Bush did not play the racial card as much in 1992 as in the 1988 campaign, while Bill Clinton tried to distance himself from some black leaders, which fits in well with these weak load-

ings for the races on the 1992 factors. The federal government, Congress, and lawyers appeared on the liberal factor in 1992.

On the conservative side, the strongest groups were fundamentalist Christians, the military, big business, and the police. During the 1992 campaign, George Bush had the vocal support of most conservative religious leaders, and he received endorsements from many (though not all) police organizations. Of course, the alignments of the military and big business with the Republican Party have been long-standing. All these groups saw their interests championed by Bush during his presidency, which helps account for their strong appearances on the conservative factor. That southerners had only a weak presence on the conservative factor may reflect the fact that the most nationally visible southerners (Bill Clinton and Al Gore) were the Democratic Party's candidates.

Also of interest in table 10.3 is the lack of association of some groups with either a liberal or conservative outlook in 1992. In particular, Jews, Asian Americans, legal immigrants, and poor people were not found to be particularly related to either the liberal or conservative factor. Table 10.2 shows that these groups were given relatively similar ratings by liberals and conservatives. Lawyers, the federal government, and whites were also given fairly similar ratings by liberals and conservatives, but lawyers and the federal government appear on the liberal side of table 10.3, while whites were clearly on the conservative factor.

A crucial question that remains is how polarized were attitudes toward liberal and conservative groups? Were they seen as opposites, or were ideological positions less polarized in 1992? This question is answered by estimating the correlation between the liberal and conservative factors. In principle, this correlation can range in value from -1.0 to +1.0. A value of -1.0 would indicate the strongest possible ideological organization: people who like liberal groups a great deal would also dislike conservative groups a great deal, and people who like conservative groups a great deal would also dislike liberal groups a great deal. A value of zero would indicate complete independence of the liberal and conservative factors: knowing how much a respondent likes liberal groups reveals nothing about how much he or she likes conservative groups. A value of +1.0 would indicate that the more a respondent likes liberal groups, the more he or she likes conservative groups.

The estimated correlation between the liberal and conservative factor is -.40. This negative and statistically significant correlation indicates that there was ideological organization underlying these attitudes, but it was relatively weak. Thus, it seems, Americans' attitudes toward social groups in 1992 did reflect ideological organization to some extent, but this was not at all the only organizing principle at work.

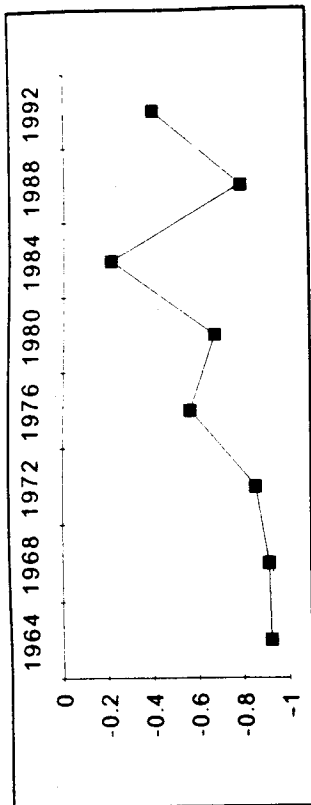


FIGURE 10.1. CORRELATION OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE FACTORS, 1964-92.

### Putting 1992 in Historical Context

Politics is dynamic in nature, so it is important to examine how attitudes toward social groups and the ideological underpinnings of those attitudes change over time. Is 1992's mapping of social groups divergent from previous years? Are there any general trends or similarities in the way the general public feels toward particular social groups? And were there changes in the degree of ideological polarization? Are people becoming more likely or less likely to see ideological clashes?

To answer these questions, we compared the social-group thermometers of 1992 with those of previous years. The list of social groups asked about in the National Election Study surveys has changed over the years, as different groups have become more and less prominent in political debates. For example, environmentalists, homosexuals, and religious fundamentalists are but three of the relevant social groups of the 1990s that were not asked about in the surveys of the 1960s. Similarly, some groups asked about in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as radical students, protesting ministers, and marijuana users, would be seen as anachronistic by the 1990s and were therefore not asked about in 1992.

At the same time, the political meaning of other social groups can change over time. A group might have been seen as liberal in an earlier time but conservative today. Such change is inevitable over a lengthy time period and tells us a good deal about how politics has shifted in the intervening years.

The most important over-time comparison is in seeing whether there has been change in the degree of ideological polarization. By comparing the correlation between the liberal and conservative factors over time, we can see the extent to which there was change in polarization between them. We have repeated the analysis of table 10.3 for all the

presidential election years since the group thermometer question was first asked in 1964. Figure 10.1 portrays the trends in the correlation between the liberal and conservative factors.

Interestingly, ideological structuring of social-group attitudes was extremely strong during the 1960s and early 1970s. Liberal and conservative positions were polar opposites during that period of American politics. By contrast, the late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed less ideological conflict. There was a slight surge at the time of Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, an election that returned ideological themes to the fore. Ideological structuring fell during Reagan's 1984 reelection (with its nonideological "Morning in America" theme), surged again in 1988 when Bush attacked Dukakis for his liberal ideology, and then fell again in the 1992 campaign when the focus was more on the economy and trust than on ideology *per se*.

To understand these changes over time better, we can compare the 1992 results with the group ratings for two earlier years: 1964, the height of ideological polarization, and 1976, an early instance of diminished polarization. These years also happen to be the last two elections before 1992 in which a Democrat won the White House; 1964 was the year of Johnson's landslide defeat of Goldwater, while 1976 was the year of Carter's very narrow win over Ford.

How much did attitudes toward these social groups change over the time period? Has the popularity of these groups stayed fairly constant, or have some groups become much more popular or unpopular? Table 10.4 displays net trends in thermometer scores by comparing the average ratings for each group in 1964, 1976, and 1992. The table shows only groups asked about in all three years.

conservatives agree or disagree in their ratings of the groups? And are the patterns different from that found for 1992? Table 10.5 shows the average ratings of the social groups in 1976 by self-identified liberals, moderates, and conservatives. (The 1964 survey did not ask respondents to locate themselves in liberal-conservative terms, so this analysis cannot be done for that year.)

Liberals, on average, gave much higher ratings to liberals, marijuana users, radical students, black militants, and civil rights leaders than did conservatives, plus somewhat higher ratings to the women's movement, Democrats, unions, and blacks. By contrast, conservatives, on average, gave much higher ratings to conservatives and Republicans than liberals did, plus somewhat higher ratings to big business, military, and the police.

The biggest change to observe here between 1976 and 1992 is at the liberal end: the groups whose ratings differed the most in 1976 were new countercultural groups—marijuana users, radical students, and black militants—which were no longer relevant social groups by 1992. Another important change involves racial groups: ratings of both blacks and whites were more polarized ideologically in 1976 than in 1992. The difference between how these groups were rated by liberals and by conservatives fell by half over these sixteen years. Liberals actually rated blacks and whites about equally both years. Conservatives in 1976 on average rated whites 17 degrees more favorably than blacks; that difference had fallen to 7 degrees in 1992. The relevance of race to ideological polarization clearly declined during this period.

Finally, we can trace how the loadings of some groups on the ideological factors changed. In particular, were the parties consistently tied to liberal-conservative conflict over the years, or has the relation between ideology and political parties changed? To test this, figure 10.2 compares the loadings of ideological and partisan groups on the liberal and conservative factors over the period in which these group thermometer ratings are available. Not surprisingly, the liberal thermometer always loaded high on the liberal factor and the conservative thermometer always loaded high on the conservative factor. More change is evident for the party thermometers. The Democrats loaded high on the liberal factor in 1964, but that loading fell sharply in the 1968–80 period until it returned to its prior strength in 1984. A comparable result is evident for Republicans: loading high on the conservative factor in 1964, with a much smaller loading for 1968–80, and large loadings since 1984.

The patterns found here are both complex and important for understanding changes in American politics during this era. First, there

TABLE 10.4  
TRENDS IN GROUP RATINGS, 1964, 1972, AND 1992

	1964 Mean	1976 Mean	1992 Mean	Difference between 1964 and 1992
Southerners	63.4	62.1	66.1	2.7
Jews	62.0	57.2	64.6	2.6
Blacks	63.0	60.6	65.3	2.3
Conservatives	56.7	59.0	56.0	-7
Catholics	65.9	63.0	65.0	-9
Liberals	53.2	52.2	51.0	-2.2
Labor unions	57.7	46.7	54.0	-3.7
Military	74.7	73.4	70.0	-4.7
Big business	60.2	48.4	55.0	-5.2
Republicans	59.5	57.6	51.6	-7.9
Whites	83.0	73.4	71.1	-11.9
Democrats	71.1	62.7	59.0	-11.1

SOURCE: 1964, 1976, and 1992. National Election Studies.

NOTE: Values shown are the mean thermometer rating of each group.

The average ratings of the groups were remarkably stable over the twenty-eight years, with most changes being under 10 points. The largest difference is the substantial drop in ratings of the Democrats, though this probably reflects the Democrats' atypical popularity when Johnson won election by landslide proportions in 1964. Ratings of the Republicans also fell during this period, though somewhat less sharply.

The other large change involves ratings of whites, which also fell sharply; ratings of blacks did not change, but the difference between ratings of the two races fell from a 20-point difference in 1964 to a 13-point difference in 1976 and a 5-point difference in 1992. There was also a substantial drop in ratings of big business and labor unions between 1964 and 1976, but their ratings went back up by 1992 to intermediate values. Note that average ratings of liberals and conservatives barely changed throughout the period, in contrast to claims of some observers that the country moved to the right in this era.

There also seems to have been a slight general decline in the ratings of nearly all these groups. This may reflect increased polarization, with opposing groups becoming more critical of their opposites. Or it might reflect an increase in public cynicism more generally.

Another useful over-time comparison is in how polarized ratings of the groups are by ideology. To what extent did liberals, moderates, and

TABLE 10.5  
SOCIAL GROUP POPULARITY BY IDEOLOGY IN 1976

	Liberals	Moderates	Conservatives	Difference between Liberals and Conservatives
Liberals	70	53	38	32
Marijuana users	51	36	25	26
Radical students	45	31	21	24
Black militants	39	24	15	24
Civil rights leaders	66	50	43	23
Women's movement	64	53	45	19
Democrats	69	61	56	13
Unions	50	46	39	11
Blacks	69	59	59	10
People on welfare	58	49	49	9
Chicanos	62	55	55	7
Poor people	77	68	71	6
Young people	78	74	74	4
Jews*	61	58	59	2
Women	80	77	81	-1
Working men	75	75	78	-3
Protestants	66	64	70	-4
Older people	80	81	84	-4
Catholics	61	62	66	-5
Southerners	60	60	65	-5
Men	69	72	75	-6
Middle class	70	73	77	-7
Whites	68	71	76	-8
Police	62	70	77	-15
Military	55	65	73	-18
Big business	37	48	56	-19
Republicans	46	58	66	-20
Conservatives	47	58	71	-24

SOURCE: 1976 National Election Study.

NOTE: Values shown are the mean thermometer scores given to each social group by the ideological categories. The last column is the difference between the mean score given to the group by liberals and by conservatives.

\* Unless noted with an asterisk, the differences in the groups' ratings are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

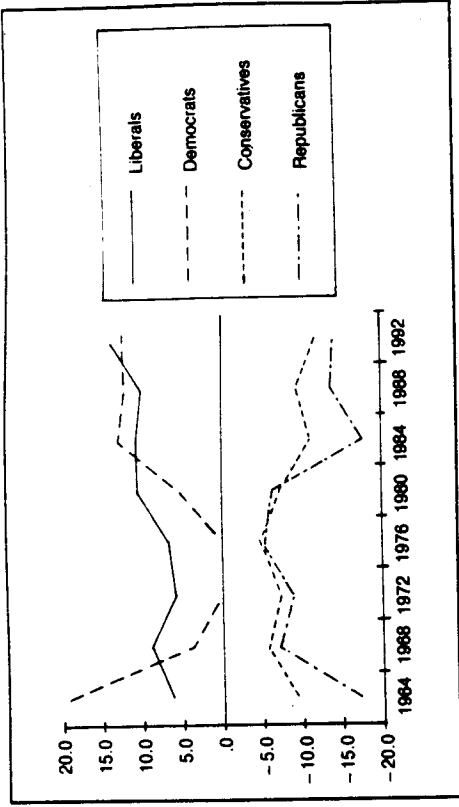


FIGURE 10.2. LOADINGS OF PARTY AND IDEOLOGY GROUPS, 1964-92.

was a shift in the ideological mapping of American politics after 1964. The 1964 results fit well with our understanding of ideological competition in party politics since the New Deal realignment, with liberal groups associated with the Democratic Party and conservatives with the Republican Party. The Vietnam war fractured these usual linkages. Politics shifted from an economic basis to concerns with the war, civil rights, and social issues. That shift is evident in the weaker associations of the parties with the liberal and conservative factors in the 1968-80 period (seen in figure 10.2), in the milder correlations between the liberal and conservative factors starting in 1976 (figure 10.1), and in the large differences in table 10.5 between how liberals and conservatives rated marijuana users, radical students, and black militants in 1976. The meaning of ideology changed in the mid-1970s. The old economic basis to liberalism was less salient to the public than were its new social linkages.

A second change is evident since the late 1970s. The degree of polarization between attitudes toward liberal and conservative social groups remains low, but the linkage of parties to the main ideological blocs has returned. Radical students and black militants seemed important in the 1970s, but by the 1990s new social groups were salient to the public: homosexuals, religious fundamentalists, the women's movement, and anti-abortionists. The public is polarized in its view of these



confirmatory factor analysis (using the LISREL computer program of Jöreskog and Sorbom 1978) of the group thermometers, with 3 factors specified: a factor on which only liberal groups loaded, a factor on which only conservative groups loaded, and a method factor on which all groups loaded equally.<sup>4</sup>

The method factor controls for "perspective differences" in how different respondents rate the social groups (see Ostrom and Upshaw 1968). Typically, some respondents view 100 on the 0-100 thermometer scale as an extremely positive score and rate all groups in the middle of the scale (say, 40-70). Other respondents view 100 as a more moderately positive score, so their ratings are in the top region of the scale (say, 70-100). Because of the perspective differences, the latter set of respondents rate all the groups higher than the other set of respondents, even if their actual feelings are identical. The statistical result of this perspective difference is to make the correlations between ratings of different groups more positive than they would otherwise be, since people who like one group more also like the other groups more (see Green and Citrin 1994). The method factor removes this artifactual correlation, so the remaining correlations may be viewed as free from perspective effects (Alwin 1974).

Other studies have also examined the degree of polarization between liberal and conservative groups. Conover and Feldman (1981) found essentially zero correlations between attitudes toward liberal and conservative political objects, but this correlation might be much more negative if perspective effects had been removed. Indeed, Green (1988) controlled for "charitability" differences between respondents and found that adjusted correlations between attitudes toward liberals and conservatives were much more negative. Similarly, Knight (1990) subtracted each respondent's mean rating on all the thermometers from his or her ratings of liberals and conservatives and found that this correction made the correlation very negative. But these studies focused only on liberals and conservatives and parties, instead of obtaining a more general ideological mapping of the social groups.

It is also important to contrast this method with two alternative approaches. One is an exploratory factor analysis of the group thermometers, as was done by Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth (1991). Exploratory factor analysis can determine the number of factors needed to account for the social group ratings. It does not control for perspective differences, however, and by finding several smaller factors, it gives less emphasis to tracing changes on the dominant liberal and conservative factors over time. Another approach is to correct just the correlation between the liberal and conservative thermometers for perspective dif-

new groups, but what is more important is that the political parties are at the core of ideological conflict in ways that they were not during the 1968-80 period.

### Conclusion

The results of this chapter fit in well with the focus on the demise of the New Deal coalition in chapter 9. Politics has changed, and the social-group relationships with ideologies and parties have changed. Yet it is difficult to move from this analysis into speculation about the future. The new social groups that seem important in the early 1990s are likely to fade in relevance as quickly as did the social groups prominent in the 1970s. The basic pattern evident is tight party ties with liberal and conservative ideology but without strong polarization between liberal and conservative groupings. The linkage of parties with ideology is the same as in 1964, but the lack of polarization between liberals and conservatives is very different from then. The public still sees groupings between ideologically similar social groups and again puts the political parties into those ideological groupings, but there is not a deep ideological divide between once opposite ideological camps. Ideology exists, without intrinsic ideological cleavage.

We would suspect that the current pattern is best seen as transitional, though it would be premature to guess what the next pattern will be. The current pattern fits with party dealignment, and it shows how Ross Perot could run as a nonparty candidate and could gain 19 percent of the vote. In a more ideologically polarized situation, it would have been difficult for a nonparty candidate to attract support. But when ideological cleavages are reduced, a nonparty candidate can assemble support outside of usual social groups or ideological lines.

More generally, our results show how interesting lessons can be learned about American politics by studying citizens' attitudes toward social groups. Group conflict will probably never disappear, so it will be interesting to repeat our analysis in a decade to see how the lines of polarization shift in the coming years.

### Appendix

In this chapter we employ a new method to examine the ideological structure of attitudes toward social groups. (Krosnick and Weisberg 1988 provide a full report on this method.) Briefly, we performed a

ferences, as by subtracting the mean score each person gives to all the groups from the liberal and conservative thermometers before correlating them (Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989). Random measurement error can have substantial effects on ratings of one or two groups, however, and our use of multiple measures better removes such random measurement effects.

### Notes

1. One distinctive aspect of the Perot candidacy is that it was not based on a coalition of social groups, which may be one reason that there were few strong correlates of voting for Perot (see chapters 3 and 6).
2. Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth (1991) provide an important alternative analysis of the structure of the social-group thermometers, with an emphasis on partisan coalitions rather than the emphasis here on ideological polarization.
3. To be more specific, table 10.3 shows the extent to which each group loads on either a liberal or conservative factor, with the perspective factor explained in the appendix being controlled. Groups on the same factor share a lot of covariation, meaning that people who tend to like one group more tend to like the other groups on the same factor more, and people who tend to dislike one group more tend to dislike the other groups on the same factor more.
4. For this analysis, we estimated the parameters of the structural equation model described by the following equation:

$$X_i = \alpha_1 \xi + \alpha_2 \eta + \alpha_3 \zeta + \mu$$

This equation specifies that any given attitude,  $X_i$ , is a function of an underlying attitude toward liberals ( $\xi$ ), an underlying attitude toward conservatives ( $\eta$ ), a perspective anchor point defined by the respondent's definitions of the positivity and negativity of the end points of the attitude scale ( $\zeta$ ), and a disturbance term ( $\mu$ ). The terms  $\alpha_1$ ,  $\alpha_2$ , and  $\alpha_3$  are regression coefficients estimating the impact of each of the latent factors on the individual attitudes. The disturbance term,  $\mu$ , includes variance due to random measurement error and item-specific true variance not shared with the other variables. The specification of a liberal and a conservative factor in this way is in line with Kerlinger's (1967, 1972; Kerlinger, Middendorp, and Amon 1976) assertion that attitudes toward liberal and conservative objects represent separate underlying factors.

In order to identify this model, we must assume that the liberal and conservative factors are uncorrelated with the method factor. It is also necessary to fix some of the loadings of items on the liberal and conservative factors to zero. We based our initial decisions about which loadings to constrain to zero on a preliminary analysis in which two factors were specified—a single substantive factor plus a method factor on which each group again loads equally. Groups were assigned to the liberal or conservative factor (or to nei-

ther) on the basis of whether their loadings on the substantive factor in the preliminary analysis were positive or negative (or not significant). The loadings for groups were fixed at zero on both factors if they had negative loadings on their assigned factor in an initial three-factor model, which indicates that they do not belong on that factor.

Respondents failed to answer some questions, and we replaced these missing data points with the number 50, the conceptual midpoint of the thermometer scale, so as to retain the largest possible sample of respondents for the analysis.